

VZCZCXRO6870
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHRB #0321/01 1051044
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 141044Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8401
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 4741
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3568
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 5945
RUEHMK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 3714
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 4986
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 9579
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0795
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA 4010

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000321

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR H, NEA/MAG, NEA/MEPI AND DRL/NESCA
DEPT PLS PASS AID/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/04/2018

TAGS: [OVIP](#) [BOEHNER](#) [JOHN](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [SY](#) [MO](#)

SUBJECT: MOROCCO: CODEL BOEHNER'S VISIT - PARLIAMENTARY
DIALOGUE AND MIDDLE EAST ISSUES

Classified By: Amb. Thomas T. Riley for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Both parliamentarians and executive branch officials warmly welcomed CODEL Boehner during a March 27-30 visit to Morocco. Representative Boehner, s counterpart, Chamber of Deputies Second Vice President Baha from the Islamic-oriented Justice and Development Party (PJD), was very positive, and avoided his customary criticism of U.S. policies. Congressman Miller suggested the House Democracy Assistance Program could be useful to Morocco. The meeting helped support the mission objective of supporting the newly elected Parliament. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director-General Amrani noted Morocco's good relations with Israel, but said that many countries in the Middle East Peace Process were taking a "wait-and-see" approach until the presidential election in the U.S. End Summary.

CODEL Boehner

¶2. (SBU) House Minority Leader Mr. John Boehner led a CODEL to Morocco March 27-30. Members of the Delegation included: Peter Hoekstra, John Carter, Jeff Miller, and Peter Roskam. After a brief stop in Fes, the delegation held meetings with counterparts in Rabat and then proceeded to Marrakech, receiving a briefing on local political conditions and the "All Democrats Movement," before returning to Washington D.C.

Meeting with Chamber of Deputies (House) Leaders

¶3. (SBU) At the Parliament, CODEL Boehner, accompanied by Ambassador Riley, was warmly received by his counterpart, Chamber of Deputies (lower house) 2nd Vice President Abdullah Baha from the Islamic-oriented Justice and Development Party (PJD). (Note: As the PJD is the largest minority party, Baha is, in effect, the minority leader. In the Moroccan parliamentary structure, heads of all major factions, in or out of majority, are vice presidents.) Also on the Moroccan side were Parliamentary Secretary Chafik Rachadi, from Speaker Mansouri's Assembly of National Independents party (RNI), Abdellah Larouji, from the (Socialist) National Union of Popular Forces party (USFP) and Mohammed Ahmed Lakhir, a staffer.

14. (SBU) Baha identified himself as a former participant in the USG's International Visitor (IV) Program. As an IV, he had visited the CODEL home states of Illinois and Texas. He looked forward to a possible future visit to Capitol Hill. Baha gave a short exposition of the long history of close Moroccan-U.S. relations, and hoped that trade between the two countries would continue to grow. He particularly appreciated USG and congressional support for Morocco's territorial integrity (i.e., its stance on Western Sahara), underscoring the importance of the U.S. role in keeping peace and preserving stability worldwide. "Terrorism is a global danger and the struggle against it requires an integrated approach," he said. (Comment: Rising to his new role, Baha avoided the criticism of U.S. policies in the region that Embassy has previously heard from him.)

15. (SBU) Rachadi noted that of the Chamber's 325 members, 34 were women. There are eight parliamentary groups (equivalent to party caucuses) of at least 20 members each. The Chamber wanted to benefit from the long experience of the U.S. House of Representatives, particularly in the area of effective communications and public relations. Rachadi expressed particular appreciation of Ambassador Riley's extensive travels even to "corners of Morocco where most members of this house never go."

16. (SBU) Boehner said he was here to help strengthen the relationship between Morocco and the U.S. "We know the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is working, and we want to see it work better." On Sahara, he said the United States supported Morocco's efforts to achieve an agreed solution and he believed their offer was generous. He advised the GOM to stay the course in the negotiations

RABAT 00000321 002 OF 002

despite their slow progress. Congressman Miller noted he was a member of the House Democracy Assistance Commission and looked forward to working on a cooperation program. Congressman Roskam said he represented over 30,000 Muslims in his own district, and noted the growing influence of Muslims as constituents in U.S. politics.

Meeting with Director General for Bilateral Affairs

17. (SBU) During the CODEL's meeting with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Director General for Bilateral Affairs Youssef Amrani on March 28, Boehner echoed the message he had given to Moroccan parliamentarians by expressing admiration and urging patience for the Moroccan approach to a solution for the Western Sahara. Boehner, again, described Morocco's autonomy plan as "generous in approach."

18. (C) In response to a question from Congressman Hoekstra regarding Morocco's view of the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), Amrani explained Morocco's positive role in encouraging a Middle East peace. Amrani said that Morocco welcomed President Bush's "unprecedented" support for an independent Palestinian State. He praised the Annapolis meeting, but warned that more concrete progress was needed to prevent extremists from taking advantage of the situation and attracting new terrorist recruits. Amrani said that many countries with interests in the MEPP process were taking a "wait-and-see" approach until the resolution of U.S. presidential election. He underscored the GOM's good relations with Israel and the importance of Morocco's Jewish community as an integral part of Moroccan society but roundly condemned Israel's policy of cutting off supplies to Gaza. He described this denial of resources as a "war," and not good for Gaza, Israel, or the world. Instead, he urged Israeli action to ease the economic burden on the Palestinian people and to stop settlement activity.

19. (C) In response to a question from Congressman Miller regarding Syria, Amrani described Syria as a country trapped

in stagnation, resistant to modernization and democratization. While the President had changed, Syria continues to be run by the same individuals around the President that have run the country for years--which, in part, explains Syria's unproductive role in influencing democratic progress on Lebanon.

¶10. (SBU) On the Western Sahara, Amrani thanked the United States for its continued support of Morocco's autonomy proposal. He expressed doubt that the deadlock could be resolved any time soon, given continued Algerian and Polisario insistence on referendum and independence. He called resolution to the conflict key to regional integration, stability, democratization, and by extension, to defeating terrorism in the Maghreb, underscoring the regional menace posed by al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb.

¶11. (SBU) In response to a question from Congressman Roskam, Amrani said that Morocco had many differences with Wahhabist ideology, especially in regard to Wahhabi gender discrimination. Amrani noted the progressive legislation that Morocco has passed to improve women's rights. "While Morocco is an Islamic country, it is an open and tolerant country." Amrani said that Morocco was concerned about the spread of Wahhabism and other conservative interpretations of the Koran. He described the rapid growth in recent years of the number of conservative religious television programs, broadcast from other Arab states but nonetheless watched by many Moroccans, as a new and disturbing trend.

Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

Riley